

Finland

Introduction to Work-Life Balance

Family leave reform promotes gender equality in working life

In Finland work-life balance falls mostly within the mandate of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, but also for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The Work-life Balance Directive will be implemented alongside the family leave reform. The family leave reform entered into force on 1 August 2022. It aims to increase gender equality both in the daily lives of families and in working life. The position of women in the labour market will improve when family leave is divided more equally between the two parents. This will affect attitudes, which in turn can reduce discrimination against women in working life.

Flexible working hours and protection for employees returning from family leave under review

The national working group has reviewed the legislation regarding:

- flexibility in working hours to support work-life balance and coping at work
- protection against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy for temporary employees
- protection against unjustified termination for employees returning from family leave.

The working group stated that part-time work is already possible under the current Finnish labour legislation. The implementation of the family leave reform and the Work-life Balance Directive will further improve the opportunities to part-time work for parents with small children.

The current Employment Contracts Act already offers stronger protection for pregnant employees and employees taking family leave. Stronger protection applies even to employees who return to work from family leave. The Act on Equality between Women and Men bans gender-based discrimination and prohibits treating employees less favourably than others on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth or parenthood.



Some issues are at the moment under discussion in the Finnish context. The national working group had differing views on whether provisions banning discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and family leave should be included in the Employment Contracts Act. However, it did not propose any such amendments to the Act. Discrimination can be best prevented by changing attitudes and practices at work. The needs to amend the Act on Equality between Women and Men will be reviewed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. (Finnish Government 2021).

Policies / Research on the effects of WLB

From the very beginning of the pandemic the effects of the pandemic were under research by different bodies, such as The Finnish institute for health and welfare, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (e.g. Finnish Government 2020).

Kestilä et al. (2021) noted that “the coronavirus epidemic changed the daily lives of almost all Finns in some way. The use of e-services and telework have increased. Many restrictive measures and recommendations sought to reduce face-to-face contact between people, which reduced social interaction and had been reflected, in particular, in a reduction in communication with friends and relatives and an increase in loneliness.”

The pandemic had extensive effects to schools and teachers’ work. According to Lavonen & Salmela-Aro (2022) the switch to distance teaching and learning was organized effectively in Finland, but the distance-learning period weakened the equality of teaching and the conditions for learning. They identified decreased engagement of students during the pandemic. At the teacher and principal levels, they identified not only decreased engagement but also increased stress and even burnout. Principals suffered from teachers’ stress, whereas teachers suffered from families’ inequality in coping with distance learning.

Also, workplaces and trade union have been active to find out how the pandemic has effected workers. They are constantly conducting surveys on working circumstances. Now special emphasis has been put on the effects of the pandemic. E.g. Trade Union of Educators (OAJ) is in their current



survey concentrating on the stress at work and the effects of distance work and the pandemic. The survey is in cooperation with the University of Turku, Occupational Health (contact Prof. Tuula Putus, Tuula.putus@utu.fi).

Initiatives

“Work to belong”- activities by a non-governmental organisation

Logo



Topic/ Area

Loneliness at work

Title

Work to belong – certificate for reducing loneliness at work

Type of Initiative

Certificate for workplaces
Webinars
“Loneliness at work” Barometer

Date released

2022

Partners/ network

Alko Inc - The national alcoholic beverage retailing monopoly
Sanoma Corporation - Finland's largest media group
OP Financial Group (Uusimaa region)

Description of the methods/ approach

Work to Belong -certificate is given for a company/organisation, which is engaged to minimize and prevent loneliness in the working community. The organisation shall use the tools, the methods and the assessment required to reduce loneliness in all levels of the organisation. Certificate shows to workers and all stakeholders, that the company is taking care of the well-being of all workers in a genuine manner.

The certification process is paid (not free of charge).

Purpose/Aim

To reduce loneliness at work

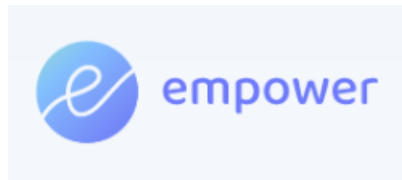


Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable) Not yet available

Web link <https://www.helsinki.fi/worktobelong/> (In Finnish)

EMPOWER (EU-project)

Logo



Topic/ Area

Title Wellbeing and mental health problems at work
The European Platform to Promote Wellbeing and Health in the workplace (EMPOWER)

Type of Initiative

- EU project
- Online Tools, Applications or Platform

Date released

Project is ongoing

Partners/ network

<https://empower-project.eu/our-team/>

- a) Hospital Sant Joan de Déu Barcelona
- b) Spain
- a) University of Canberra
- b) Australia
- a) Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management
- b) The Netherlands
- a) Fondazione ADAPT
- b) Italy
- a) Fondazione IRCCS I Istituto Neurologico Carlo Besta
- b) Italy
- a) Nofer Institute Of Occupational Medicine
- b) Poland
- a) OMADA
- b) Spain
- a) Swiss Paraplegic Research (SPF)
- b) Switzerland
- a) Turku Centre for Occupational Health
- b) Finland
- a) The University of York
- b) UK



Description of the methods/ approach

a) Universidad Autonoma de Madrid

b) Spain

a) Vrije Universiteit Brussel

b) Belgium

EMPOWER will develop and test a platform to reduce the impact of mental health in the workplace. The overall work plan can be divided into three phases; The development of the platform (WP1 and 2), The evaluation (WP3 and 4) and the dissemination and policy recommendations. The project will have a 4-year duration to allow for the proper completion of all the tasks.

WP1: Design of an eHealth platform to reduce the

large impact of mental health problems in the workplace

WP2: Development of the online and eHealth platform tools and pilot study.

WP3: Field trials in SMEs and public agencies

WP4: Quantitative and qualitative assessment of

the EMPOWER platform.

Purpose/Aim

Aim 1:

Develop, in collaboration with all stakeholder groups, a modular, culturally- and gender-sensitive multi-modal and integrative eHealth platform compiling the most feasible, brief and cost-effective interventions currently available in Europe to promote health and wellbeing, prevent common mental disorders and reduce the impact of mental health problems in the workplace, taking into account both contextual and individual factors, including co-morbidities.

Aim 2:

Pilot the implementation of this eHealth platform by means of a randomized controlled trial directed to



employees and employers of SMEs and public agencies, including workplaces with new working trends, such as remote jobs, from three European countries representing different cultural settings.

Aim 3:

Evaluate the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit and potential societal impact of the eHealth platform and its components as well as the factors influencing a favourable uptake of the eHealth platform in practice.

Aim 4:

Ensure, in collaboration with the External Ethics Committee, that every action and output carried out within the EMPOWER project complies with any legal and ethical requirements and analyse work-related legislation and directives for mental health and wellbeing that could facilitate the implementation of the EMPOWER platform.

Aim 5:

Investigate the most effective implementation strategies for the successful uptake of the eHealth platform and determine, supported by input from collaborating stakeholders, the most appropriate strategy for the program.

Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable) Project is ongoing.

Web link

<https://empower-project.eu/>

References/ online sources

Project videos:

<https://empower-project.eu/videos/>

